Moral Values in Human Development  SESP 225-316
School of Education and Social Policy
Northwestern University
Course Syllabus Spring 2004

Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30 – 10:50 AM
Instructor: Carol A. Gaetjens Ph.D.
Annenberg G02
c-gaetjens@northwestern.edu

Course Description:
Moral Values in Human Development is designed to help students examine a number of important questions from the perspective of developmental psychology: What are moral values and ethical behavior? What do we mean when we speak of someone as a person of “high moral values?” Are human beings born moral and if not, how and when do they become moral? What is moral education? What is the evidence, if any, that moral development can continue throughout the life course? Are there gender differences in moral thought and behavior? What connection is there between moral reasoning and moral behavior? Philosophers, theologians, ethicists and educators have grappled with these questions at least since Plato and continue to debate the answers today.
In the past 100 years social scientists, including psychologists, psychiatrists, social psychologists, and sociologists have made important contributions to this ongoing discussion. To help in addressing these questions about moral values and moral behavior several major perspectives on the development of moral values across the lifespan will be explored: the psychodynamic understanding provided by Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson, and Selma Fraiberg; the cognitive development theories of the psychologists Piaget, Kohlberg and Gilligan; and the clinical and research observations of Robert Coles, William Damon, Anne Colby, William Perry, John Kotre, Robert Wuthrow and others. The course ends with readings that link the development of moral values to behavior and social policy issues.

Course Rationale:
Students who intend to work in the fields of education, public policy, and corporate life will find this course invaluable for recognizing and understanding the implications of individual and social moral values in their private lives, as parents, as citizens, and as professionals and leaders in their chosen careers.

Course Format:
This is a reading and discussion class intended primarily for upper classmen. Class size is limited to 25 students. Evaluation of student achievement will take into account attendance, evidence of careful preparation, and participation in class discussions, as well as the quality of papers based on the readings, class discussions, and self-reflection. It is recommended that students who enroll in this course have completed either Child and Adolescence (SESP 225-C01) or Adulthood and Aging (SESP 225-C02).

Course Objectives:
By the end of the course students will have clarified their personal moral values and have evidenced respect for the values of individuals and groups whose ethical beliefs differ from their own, both in face to face dialogue, and in responding to divergent positions reflected in the reaction papers to the readings.
**Required Books and the Course Packet:** There is no primary textbook for this course. Instead, the readings in the books you have been required to purchase and in your course packet will provide the content, organization of information, and a variety of perspectives on the major themes concerning the topic of moral values in human development. The books maybe purchased at Norris Bookstore.


A 2 volume course packet containing selected readings should be purchased in the SESP Office of Student Affairs on the first floor of Annenberg Hall.

**School of Education and Social Policy Academic Integrity Statement, March 2004.** Students in this course are expected to comply with the policies found in the booklet, “Academic Integrity at Northwestern University: A Basic Guide”. All papers submitted for credit in this course must be sent as email attachments as well as delivered in printed form. Your written work may be electronically tested for plagiarized content. For details regarding academic integrity at Northwestern, visit: [http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/](http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/). If you need a copy of the brochure visit the SESP Student Affairs Office on the 1st floor of Annenberg Hall.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities.** Any student with a verified disability requiring special accommodations should speak to the course instructor and to the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (847-467-5530) or visit their office in the basement of Scott Hall as early as possible in the quarter, preferably within the first two weeks of the course. All discussions will remain confidential.

**Read this carefully:**

**General guidelines for papers:** All papers, whether short or long, should be well organized, with an introductory paragraph that states your general position and the points or ideas you will make in support of your position. Then follow that introductory outline in the same order in the body of your paper. The tone of the paper should be academic (not folksy). Remember your name is on the paper so the reader knows what you write is what you think, believe, or feel. In other words, avoid personal pronouns, “I” and “we” as much as possible.

**Formatting:** All papers should be formatted as follows: double-spaced, size 12 font, and at least one inch margins on all sides. **Your first and last names must be in the upper right hand header on each page along with the page number on each page. Papers without correct headers in the top right corner will not be graded.** So you must learn to use your header (and footer) function. All references must be cited in the text in American Psychological Association (APA) approved style and included in the reference list at the end of paper. Don’t obsess about this, just do it by following the format examples in the syllabus, the course packet and the APA guideline sheet that is handed out.
Warning: Take a few extra minutes to read in hard copy, for sentence fragments, misspellings, singular and plural mismatches, repetitiveness and general lack of clarity. If you have a friend that is willing to read the paper, have s/he do so. Two sets of eyes are always better than one. The spell-check on your computer is helpful but does not replace proof-reading of hard copy. Careless errors in writing and presentation detract from good conceptual work and will be reflected in the grade awarded your paper.

Note: If a paper is due on a class date, come to class whether the paper is done or not! In addition to hard copy, you must send me the paper as an email attachment to c-gaetjens@northwestern.edu preferably as a Microsoft Word document any time until midnight of the same day. No points will be deducted if the paper is received on the day it is due regardless of the time. The point is I want you to be in class to participate in discussion whether your paper is done or not!

Course Requirements and Grading:
Grading is based on participation and written assignments. There are a total of 140 possible points. The expectation is that in an upper-class seminar all students who participate and turn in all their assignments will earn an A or B depending on the quality of the work.

Class attendance and participation: The success of this course depends largely on the conscientious preparation, regular attendance and informed participation of all its members. Without this commitment, the quality of individual class discussions and the value of the course as a whole will be seriously compromised. (10 points)

Written assignments:

Assignment 1: What are your moral values? When (at what age), where (setting, e.g., home, school, religious training, scout troops, sports teams), and from whom (a mentor, teacher, coach) or from what (an incident, a turning point, a book, a spring break project) did you learn these values? Consider such factors as your gender, geographical location in growing up (urban, suburban, rural), race and/or ethnicity, socio-economic status, formal religious training or lack thereof. Length 3 pages. For some of you, this will require editing to make the page length. Make every sentence count and avoid repetition. Due April 9 (15 points)

Assignment 2: As an expert in moral development in children, you have been asked by an elementary school district serving children from preschool (age 3) to 6th grade (age 11 or 12) to address a group of interested parents and teachers about what they can do to promote moral development at home and in the classroom. Include differences in the moral development of boys and girls if you think they are pertinent. Length 4-6 pages Include references. Due April 22 (30 points)

As a expert in moral development in children, you have been asked by a combined group of educators from the local high school and neighboring community college to address the issue of what they can do to promote moral development in this age group. Length 4-6 pages. Include references Due April 22 (30 points)

Assignment 3: Watch the movie “Cider House Rules” in DVD/VCR format and then write a paper addressing the following questions. One good paragraph for each will be sufficient. Be prepared to share them with your classmates in discussion and to turn them into me to read and grade.

Dr. Larch: Was he performing a needed service? Was performing abortions illegal? Did his addiction problem with ether interfere with his functioning? Did he use Homer for his own...
ends? Was he a megalomaniac who thought he could run his own little world, however benign? Does the end justify the means in this story?

Homer: Is it possible that Homer matured morally by performing the act of abortion on Rose after having been adamantly against abortion earlier in the movie? When he decides to return to the orphanage to be “of use” is he acting immorally in that he is not a certified doctor or is acting morally by carrying on the role of Dr. Larch and serving as a father figure to orphans forgotten by society? Which is of higher value in the big picture?

Mr. Rose: Was Mr. Rose a good man, that is, a man who knew between right and wrong? Did he have a well-developed conscience or was he morally bankrupt for committing incest with his daughter? Could a case be made for his behavior by the circumstances of his life that permitted little contact with women? Did his self-injuries and death atone for his earlier behavior?

Cider House Rules: What was the point of the rules posted in the migrant shack? What did they mean symbolically and in reality? **Length 2-3 pages. Due April 29 (15 points)**

**Assignment 4:** After reading Coles’ *Lives of Moral Leadership* and the articles by Colby and Damon (1995), Kotre (1999), Wuthnow (1991) and Tornstam (1997), summarize what life and contextual factors you think are more likely to produce exemplary moral leaders. Length 3-4 pages. **May 11 (20 points)**

**Assignment 5:** After reading Sissela Bok’s book *Lying: Moral choice in public and private life* consider under in what situations or under what conditions you would lie or at least consider lying? **Length 3-4 pages May 25 (20 points)**

**Assignment 6:** **Final paper.** After reading Nel Noddings’ *Starting at home: Caring and social policy* (2002) give thought to how individuals’ collective values shape public policy, especially in regards to vulnerable groups; homeless people, mentally ill, the illiterate, criminals, drug traffic, runaway children, children in foster care, teenage pregnancies. Pick a group or groups or an social issue that you care about and attempt to apply Noddings’ notion of caring in speculating what a truly humane public policy might look like. **Length 4-6 pages Monday June 7 during the final exam period. (30 points)**

**Tentative Class Schedule**

**Class 1:** March 30  
I. Review of course outline, expectations, key definitions  
Assorted charts, excerpts from textbooks explaining Freud, Erikson and Piaget.

**Class 2:** April 1  
II. Moral Values: what are we talking about?


**Class 3:** April 6  
III. Personal Values Statement is Due.
Class 4: April 8  IV. Toddlers and Pre-school age children: Moral emotions


Class 5: April 13  V. School-aged Children


Class 6: April 15  VI. Gender Differences in Moral Development: Do they exist?


Class 7: April 20 VII. Adolescence, college aged and young adulthood.


Class 8: April 22 Assignment 2 Expert presentation on promoting moral values

Class 9 April 27 VIII. Adulthood and Later Life

Questions: Is there evidence that adults can and do continue to grow in moral reasoning and behavior? What experiences and contexts seem to promote further moral development?


Class 10 April 29 Cider House Rules Assignment 3 due

Class 12: May 6 IX. Living the moral life. Moral exemplars.


Assignment 4 due:

X. Values and Behavior


Moral Choice in Private and Public Life 1

Moral Choice in Private and Public Life 2

Catch- up Day

Assignment 5: After reading Sissela Bok’s book Lying: Moral choice in public and private life consider under in what situations or under what conditions you would consider lying? 2-3 pages

XI Moral Values and Social Policy 1

Moral Values and Social Policy 2

Final exam: Monday June 7, 2004 3:00-5:00 PM. Assignment 6: Final paper. After reading Nel Nod ding’s Starting at home: Caring and social policy (2002) give thought to how individuals collective values shape public policy, especially in regards to vulnerable groups; homeless people, mentally ill, the illiterate, criminals, drug traffic, children in foster care, teenage pregnancies. Pick a group or groups or an issue that you care about and attempt to apply Nodding’s notion of caring in speculating what a truly human public policy might look like. 4-6pages Be prepared to present your viewpoint to the class. Papers due in hard copy. Attendance is required.